The Bishop of Worcester's LETTER To his Reverend Clergy within the County and Diocess of Worcester.

5.

With some short and genuine Animadversions upon it.

HAving received in a Letter from a Person of Eminent Quality in the County of *Worcester*, who is pleas'd to Honour me with his particular Friendship and esteem, That of this Right Reverend Bishop; and being assured from him, upon the Testimony of a Clergyman of that *Diocess*, who has one of the Originals, (for it seems there were several of them sent abroad) that it was an exact Copy, I was mightily pleased with his great kindness in it, and upon reading it several times over, I thought it very well worthy of many good Animadversions.

Indeed I could have wished this Labour had been saved me by a more Ingenious and habile Pen; for then not only I my self should have got considerable Improvement by the learned remarks that must needs have been made on it, but the publick would no doubt have testifyed greater acknowledgments, and have given their just applauses, according to *Cicero's* opinion, *Habet enim justam veneration quicquid excellit.*

But having waited thus long, and finding none so generously inclined as to bestow his serious thoughts this way for common good and benefit; I conceived it would not be altogether ungrateful to the world if I should venture at it; and, rather than have all lost, present you with my short and natural Reflections upon the Letter that follows.

To the Rectors, Vicars, and others within the County and Diocess *of* Worcester, James *by Divine permission Bishop of* Worcester, *sendeth greeting.*

WHereas the Knights and Principal Gentlemen of the County, (in pursuance of his Majesties Writ for calling and holding a Parliament at *Westminster* upon the 17*th* of *October* next coming) have met together and resolved and pitched upon Collonel *Samuel Sands*, to stand as a Candidate to be elected for one of the Knights of the Shire to serve in the said Parliament; We taking into Consideration his constant, known, and steady affection, loyalty, and fidelity to the Crown and Church of *England*, do recommend him to You as a Person that will be firm and faithful to the Interest of the King, the true Protestant Religion, and the Common good of the People of this Realm; And we do earnestly desire You to give your suffrages for him, and to ingage such as are qualified in your Parishes to do the like, upon *Wednesday* next, being the third of *September*; and thus leaving You wholly to your freedom in the other part of your choice, but confiding

confiding in your filial and hearty compliance in this, we recommend You to God's Holy Protection, and remain,

Your Affectionate Friend and Brother
James Bishop of *Worcester*.

THis is the Letter *Verbatim* as it came to my hands; and how kindly it is written for advancing the Interest, or but maintaining the natural liberty and property of the more inferiour Commons, you shall in part see by and by.

But before I come to take notice of the Letter it self, I think it will not be very improper here by the way to observe, how much that dissenting party from the Church of *England*, I mean, the *Presbyterians*, is taxed for *going* (as they say like *Satan*) *to and fro in the Earth, and for walking up and down in it* to make their parties for Elections; what tricks and insinuations they use to gain *Proselites*; and especially in this late Election for our *Metropolis*, the City of *London*, where they said, as I my self heard it, there were three of their chiefest Ministers particularly, but whom they would not name, that made it their great business to run from house to house to secure Votes for a Worthy member and Patriot of it, whom another party, under the *Vizar* and *Masquerade* of Church of *England* men, would fain have set beside the Cushion; when as, for I have made as particular an Inquiry into it as possibly I could, not one of them has stirred in it any further than perchance accidental common Conversation has brought them on; but, as I believe the party who affirm'd it only vapoured, and would fain have blackened them, if his silly word would have been credited; so, on the other hand, put the case it had been so, they had done nothing but what they could have produced a very good president for, from this Letter, which was a long time *Antecedent* to the Election here, and I hope none will be so spiteful as to hit their own selves a box o'th' ear in blaming them for their Conformity to the Church, but will be rather glad to see that they will in any thing come over to it, and take their Measures from it.

For my part, I am so much a Lover of unity and peace, and so impatient of whatsoever looks like faction, or dividing Interests, that I should be one of the first to cast a stone at that man that sets himself to make a party: for, if we are free-born, let's injoy our priviledg, and not suffer our selves to be cullied and ham-string'd by every formal *Fop* that perhaps either has a hank upon us, or else has got the knack to talk more oylily than our selves. I would have my judgment my own, and would choose where I please, and not give another man the power to say he has got me in his pocket, and he can shake me *like a Dog in a blanket*. But now to my Subject.

And first of all I think it is very easy to remark, that the *Knights* and *Principal Gentry* of a *County*, when any Important Affair of the *State* is to be managed, (as is this of *Electing Parliament-men*) do meet together, and in their *private Cabals*, do consult and resolve among themselves how the matter shall determine, and which way they will have things to go; and after this, then they pitch upon such ways and means as they judg most

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proper to be conducive to those Ends: and here in this case that we have before us, You see they take this course; so that by this means, if any would have a particular faction or party, be it about business of either *Church* or *State*, carryed on; it is only to make your interests with these great *Do-alls* of their *respective Shires* or *Districts*, by bribes of Money, preferments to high places, or by getting honours to be conferred on them, *&c.* And when you have once brought them over to you, and made 'em your own, you may *sleep on, and take your rest*, as it is said in another case, for they know how to do your work well enough without any further troubling them.

And when they have concluded the matter thus by themselves, it is as obvious to any considering man as the former, that they then go, and acquaint the Right Reverend their Bishop with what they have done, *and pray in aid* to him, that he would graciously please to inform the Clergy over whom he presides, with their *project*; and by an *express* to let them know, how agreeable it is to his Lordship, how good in it self, and how honourable it will be for them to be seen in, and advance the cause; and not only that they themselves would stir in it, but recommendations must be made to them, that they do all they can *to ingage such as are qualified in their Parishes*, to lay their Shoulders to the work, and according to their power to influence all others of their acquaintance *junctis viribus* to do the like.

And therefore because the Knights and principal Gentlemen in a County have pitched upon such a one, (be he never so deserving a person, or never so otherwise, that is nothing to the purpose) as for instance, to be a Member of *Parliament*, he must of necessity be the man: so that as I take it, (and I would not willingly mistake the point) this is to exclude the Commonalty absolutely to have a hand in the choice; for they must not dare to give a Negative Vote if they should be injoined to stand up for such or such a particular person; and by this means they are cashiered of that power and liberty, and that property that they have, to appear in the behalf of another person, whom they may think to be better qualified, or however, whom they may like better, and otherwise would choose, if they were not beforehand so ingaged.

But further, by leaving them to their freedom in the other part of their choice, (as is here mentioned) doth imply a Restraint upon them and that, despotically, or magisterially, for the first; by which means, if comonly practised by other Bishops, the *Parliament* may make an Act to exclude the Clergy from voting, as they did those that had Lease-lands, nay Copyholds of Inheritance; presuming they would be byassed by their Lords of their Estates to vote which way they pleased, for fear of a black reckoning when they came to renew. Besides, if they do restrain them for one, as here you see it is plainly proved *de facto*, why may they not by the same right and justice lay a restraint on them for both: And how can they then be said indeed to be our representatives, when possibly they may not be those persons whom we would have to represent us, but are such as the

Knights

Knights and principal Gentlemen of the County, together with the Bishop and his Clergy, will impose upon us, and make us to stand by, for fear of worse circumstances to befal our selves.

Again, *By his confiding in their filial and hearty compliance*, he doth explain the restraint as to the first vote: That is, methinks, as much as to say, we will oblige you to choose one such man as we would have you, and to be made a mouth of by us in that particular, and we will *give you freedom in the other part of your choice*; we will put the wheadle on you as for the other, you shall seem wholly to elect him, though he be fore-ordained to be the man, by our selves at our private Cabinet-board: for, to be sure, if you are once so far prevailed upon as to yield to their Judgments in one, you tacitely do acknowledg that you have not understanding, and be not fit enough of your selves to make a wise and safe choice without their previous direction, and so consequently will be easily led away to give your suffrage for any other, whom perhaps some of the slie pretenders to your party, (if that may be called so, which is only a disinteressed affection to serve you Country) may by their secret order and impulse loudly bawle out for, and cry up; so that in one sense there will be a restraint upon you as for both, though knowingly it shall appear but for one, and to that it plainly seems you must comply.

Moreover, which to me looks like a Paradox, for it is *contradictio in adjecto*; he expects from them a filial or son-like obedience, and yet he subscribes himself their Brother; he would have them blindly to pay him the duty of Children, but he does not stile himself their Father: indeed he is their right Reverend Father in God to superintend them in spiritual affairs, and in Divine Mysteries; but I do not very well understand, how it is his *Province* to charge them with the cares of *State*, how he can *ingage* them to run up and down after all *such as are qualified in their parishes*, and get Votes for the beloved *Candidate*; but yet this they are obliged to do, if they mean to show their filial respect to their honour'd elder Brother; for here's their Injunction; and, *litera scripta manet*, should they prove obstinate and restive, and offer to disobey the precept, this hand-writing would no doubt rise up in judgment against them, and render them inexcusable.

This is by no means to reflect upon that Worthy Gentleman, whom this Letter has a relation to; for all persons I can hear of, that have any acquaintance with him, give him deservedly a most honourable mention; and I cannot in the least imagine but that the qualified Electing persons would voluntarily have given him their voice to be one of their Representatives, without the Solicitations and ingagements of their Clergy to them. But this is to show by what ways and artifices Men may get to be chosen, and to leave it upon a *dubitatur in Lege*, how far such things are just and rightful.

FINIS.